

MY THIRTY YEARS IN BASEBALL

By JOHN J. McGRAW.

The Real Mark of Superiority in a Ball Team—Secret of Ty Cobb's Success—The "Steal and Slam" Play—McGraw's Specialty—Effect of the Lively Ball.

(Released exclusively through the North American Newspaper Alliance.)
ARTICLE 16.

Our Baltimore team of 1895 was even better than the one of 1894, the year of our first championship. It was practically the same team; that is, the individual players were the same, but the machine was being perfected by more accurate adjustment of the various cogs. Each player knew the function of the other and did his part to bring about perfect co-ordination.

Other clubs had good batters, good fielders, good catchers and good pitchers. It was very clear to us that an advantage would lie in the way we got the most out of our strength. We sat up at nights and talked these matters over. Every suggestion was given consideration, sometimes in the form of hot argument and sometimes in calm deliberation. We all had the same aim—to win—and we wanted it to be a victory of the team, not of the individual.

Obviously the secret of advantage was in base running—getting the larger number of runs out of a given number of hits. Right there is the mark of superiority of a ball club. That, I suppose, is true in any walk of life.

The Orioles had speed and could hit. By constant experiment we developed a system of base running that soon became famous. At the same time we had to develop a system of defence against base running by our opponents. I think I can truly say that we were pioneers in the present art of getting the most runs out of the least number of hits.

That hit and run play was our best form of attack, though we often varied it. If, when the first man up got on base and the next batter was a good place hitter, we were almost certain to signal, or give the sign, as ball players call it, for the hit and run. The runner would start from first base with the pitch and if the batter hit behind the runner he would go to third. If a play was made to get him at third the batter would go on to second. We always took chances. There is always an advantage in taking close chances. It puts the other fellow up against the worry about what to do. In other words, we would test his nerve instead of letting him test ours. That, incidentally, is one of the secrets of Ty Cobb's success. He always tests the other man's nerve.

Of course, opponents got to know this system. Then it was that we had to vary it. Often we used a play that was called "steal and slam." It was simply a variation of the hit and run. The man on first would take a lead to actually steal the base. In that case, if the ball was a good one, the batter would slam at it. If the pitcher, expecting a hit and run, pitched out, the batter would simply let it go and take a chance on the runner stealing the base. In a majority of cases a fast runner would be safe. The batter then would be in a better position than ever. With a runner on second he could take his time and wait for a good one. He could even sacrifice so as to advance the runner to third and have a man on third with only one out.

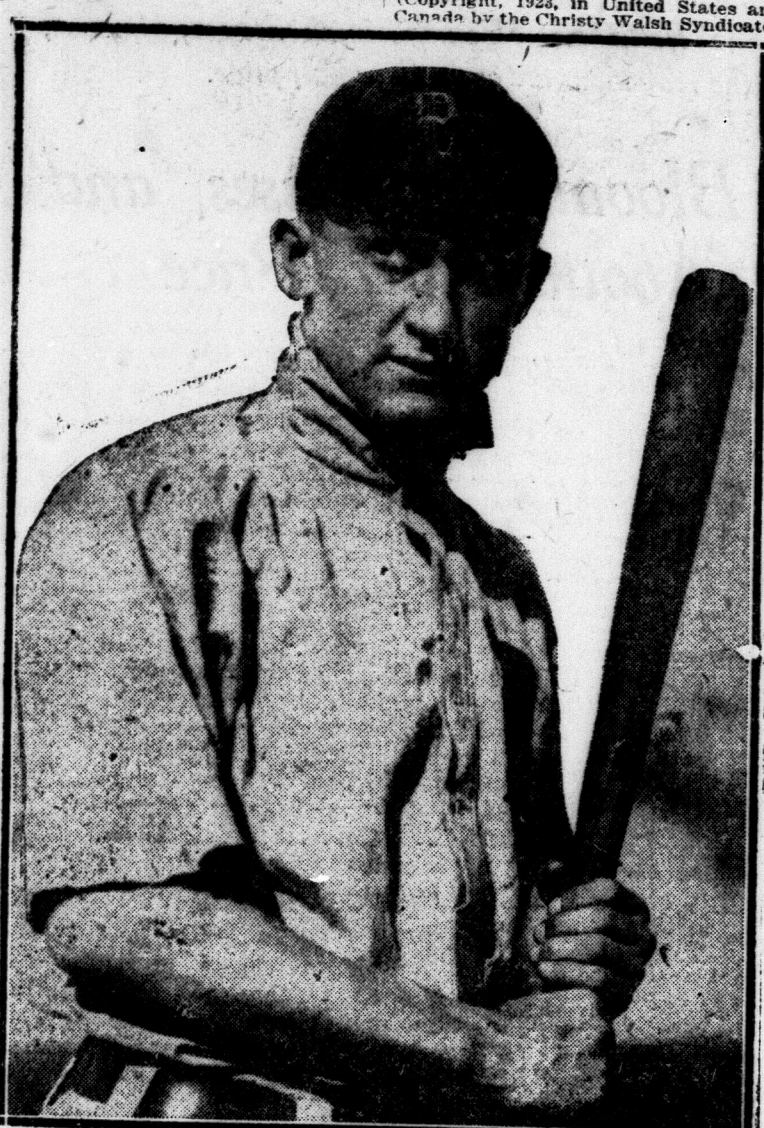
I think we were among the first to develop a scheme for preventing the traditional double steal when there are runners on first and third. In the early days, before my time even, it was almost certain that if the man on first started for second and a throw was made to get him the man on third would score. To this day that is a hard play to stop, but we manage to handle it rather successfully now.

Our first plan was to let the second baseman cover the bag. The shortstop would run in, crossing in front of second, and take the throw and whip the ball to the plate in time to get the runner from third. That was known as the "short throw." It also had its disadvantage. Soon the runner on third got to expect the play. As a result he would run back to third and both would be safe, it being too late to get the man going to second.

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TY COBB, THE ARTIST OF THE UNEXPECTED.

The only way to beat that play successfully is to have a nervy second baseman or shortstop with a good arm. Simply let the throw from the catcher go through. If the second baseman is quick and accurate he can take the throw and then whip the ball back to the plate in time to catch the runner from third. If the man on third does not start then he can tag out the runner from first. To attempt this play, though, would be stupid unless the catcher and second baseman were both accurate throwers and able to get the ball away quickly. Amateurs could hardly do that.

In the last world's series both the Giants and Yanks made the play by taking a chance on the long throw. In a college game, where the players are not so expert, the short throw seems to work better.

Another play, used merely as a surprise, is for the pitcher to intercept the throw and whip it right back to the catcher. Still another system that we worked successfully, and it took Wilbert Robinson to do it, was for the catcher to make a bluff as if to throw to second. Instead he turns and whips the ball to third, catching the runner off the bag. That play can not be worked too often. Otherwise the other side will get wise and signal the man on third to stick to his bag. If he did so both runners would be safe. It is up to the nimble mind of the catcher to decide which play to make and act simultaneously with his thought.

It was not so much the originality of these various plays that counted with the Orioles. It was the perfection with which they were carried out. We studied those things out at night and practiced them repeatedly in the morning. Though it never seems to strike ball players that way, it is really easier to make a steal of third than of second. That was one of my long suits. It was rare that I was ever thrown out stealing third. In fact, no ball player ought to be thrown out. His eye should tell him when to start. His judgment of time and distance must be naturally accurate. In other words, he should never start for third until he has sufficient lead. He is able to get that lead by being behind the pitcher. If he has the lead then there is no excuse for his being thrown out. If he does miss it is because his judgment is bad.

Fred Merkle was not what one could call a very fast man on a sprint, but he was an adept at stealing third base. He never started unless he had the right lead. Once started, he rarely missed. And to steal third is of enormous advantage.

There is no doubt but that the art of base running has fallen into decline due to the lively ball. That is one of the questions asked by those who have seen in filled out questionnaires. The answer is obvious. Base running is really a matter of taking chances so as to profit by a succeeding hit. In the old days the single was to be expected. We didn't look for doubles, triples and home runs as we do now.

Singles are also more frequent now because with the lively ball any kind of a grounder is likely to shoot past an infielder for a clean hit. Fans, I believe, don't realize how much harder the infielder's job has become since the advent of the lively ball. Now, instead of taking chances on base running stunts, I find that often there is more percentage in letting the runner hold his base and wait

for the next man to hit one through. That accounts for the falling off in base stealing. The runner sees nothing to be gained by taking desperate chances when a long hit is likely to come any time and drive him around.

I am sorry to see the fine art of base running go into the discard, but it would be foolish to take chances that do not gain anything. In fact, the chances of the batter hitting one through are greater than those of the runner stealing the base.

There are other serious drawbacks to the lively ball.

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CAPTAIN BLOOD

By Rafael Sabatini

Continued From Yesterday.

He stalked out, and his three captains—although they thought him mad—rolled after him in loyal silence. Inwardly M. de Rivalro burned with shame and rage. The mask had been plucked from him, and he had been held up to scorn—he, the general of the king's armies by sea and land in America.

Nevertheless, it was to Cartagena that they sailed in the middle of March. Volunteers and negroes had brought up the forces directly under M. de Rivalro to twelve hundred men. With these he thought he could keep the buccaner contingent in order and submissive.

Narrowly they missed the Jamaica fleet with Colonel Bishop, which sailed north for Tortuga two days after the Baron de Rivalro's southward passage.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Having crossed the Caribbean in the teeth of contrary winds, it was not until the early days of April that the fleet of the Baron de Rivalro, summoned a council aboard his flagship to determine the method of assault.

"It is of importance, messieurs," he told them, "that we take the city by surprise, not only before it can put itself into a state of defence, but before it can remove its treasures inland. I propose to land a force sufficient to achieve this to the north of the city tonight after dark."

It was sheer obstinacy and empty pride that drove him, and he received the lesson he deserved. The fleet stood in the afternoon, and within a mile of the coast, and under cover of darkness three hundred men were pulled away for the shore in the canoes, pirates and ships' boats. Rivalro's pride compelled him, however much he may have disliked the venture, to lead them in person.

The first six boats were caught in the surf, and pounded into fragments before their occupants could escape themselves. The thunder of the breakers and the cries of the shipwrecked warned those who followed, and thereby saved them from sharing the same fate.

The Baron was back to his flagship an infuriated, but by no means a wiser man. He was weakened at dawn by the rolling thunder of guns. Emerging upon the poop in nightcap and slippers, he beheld a sight that increased his unreasonable and unreasoning fury. The four buccaner ships under canvas were going through extraordinary manoeuvres half a mile off the Boca Chica and little more than half a mile away from the main body of the fleet, and from their flanks flame and smoke were belching each time they swung broadside to the great round fort that guarded that narrow entrance. The fort was returning the fire vigorously and viciously. But the buccaners timed their broadsides with extraordinary judgment to catch the defending ordnance reloading; then as they drew the Spaniards' fire, they swung away again, not taking the care to be ever-moving targets, but further to present no more than bow or stern to the fort, their masts in line, when the heaviest cannonades were to be expected.

Gibbering and cursing, M. de Rivalro stood there and watched this action, so presumptuously undertaken by Blood on his own responsibility. Meanwhile the fight went merrily on. The fort was suffering badly. Yet for all their manoeuvring the buccaners were not escaping punishment. The starboard gunwale of the Atropos had been hammered into splinters, and a shot had caught her stern in the coach. The Elizabeth was badly battered about the fore-castle, and the Arabella's mainmast had been shot away, with toward the end of that engagement the Lachesis came reeling out of the fight with a shattered rudder, steering.

Mrs. Peter watched them, and as she watched they grew bigger. So did little Mrs. Peter. Those two dark spots were bobbing along over the snow very fast, and they were coming straight toward the dear Old Briar Patch, as if only for a few minutes there. One of them was Peter. She was sure of that. But who could it be behind him? It must be an enemy. It must be someone chasing Peter. She was so sure of it, she wasn't until Peter was almost to the dear Old Briar Patch that she really saw who it was behind him. Then her heart gave a bound for joy. It was her father, Old Jed Thumper! She guessed that Peter had been to get him. She knew it when a few minutes later Peter and Old Jed Thumper were safe in the dear Old Briar Patch.

The next story: "Old Jed Thumper is a Chained Rabbit."

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It may have been a couple of hours later, when Captain Blood, as hours and cool as if he had just come from a leave, stepped upon the deck of the Victoria, to confront M. de Rivalro, still in bed-gown and nightcap.

"I have to report, M. le Baron, that we are in possession of the fort on Boca Chica. The standard of France is flying from what remains of its tower, and the way into the outer harbor is open to your feet."

M. de Rivalro was compelled to swallow his fury.

"You are fortunate, M. Blood, that you succeeded," he said. "It would have gone very ill with you had you failed."

Blood pointed out the fort at the mouth of the inner harbor, which was just barely visible above the waving palms on the intervening tongue of land. He announced that its capture was less formidable than that of the outer fort, which he had reduced; but on the other hand, the passage was very much more difficult. And presently, before they could attempt to make it in any case, they must dispose of those defenses. He proposed that the outer harbor be entered by the outer harbor, and proceed at once to bombardment. Meanwhile, he would land three hundred buccaners and some artillery on the eastern side of the lagoon, beyond Frazer's gas den islands dense with richly-bearing fruit-trees, and proceed simultaneously to the fort in the inner harbor. Thus, based on both sides, and demoralized by the fate of the much stronger outer fort, he offered to the Spaniards would offer a very long resistance. This it would be for M. de Rivalro to garrison the fort, whilst Captain Blood would sweep up with his men.

At noon on the morrow, shorn of defenses and threatened with bombardment, Cartagena sent offers of surrender to M. de Rivalro. Swollen with pride by a victory for which he took the entire credit to himself, the Baron dictated his terms. He demanded that all public effects and office accounts be delivered up; that the merchants surrender all moneys and goods held by them for their correspondents; the inhabitants should choose whether they would remain in the city or depart; but those who went must first surrender half, and become the subjects of France; religious houses and churches should be spared, but they must render accounts of all moneys and valuables in their possession.

Cartagena agreed, having no choice in the matter, and on the next day, which was the 6th of April, M. de Rivalro entered the city and proclaimed it now a French colony, appointing de Cussy its governor.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Honor of M. de Rivalro. During the capitulation and for some time after, Captain Blood and the great number of his buccaners had been at their post utterly in ignorance of what was taking place. Blood, although the man chiefly responsible for the swift reduction of the city, was not even shown the consideration of being called to the council of officers.

This was a slight that, at another time Captain Blood would not have borne for a moment. But at present, in his odd frame of mind, and its content to smile his superior of the French general. Not so, however, his captains, and still less his men. It was only by undertaking to voice their grievance to the Baron that their captain was able for the moment to pacify them.

The Baron sat scrutinizing ledgers, like a city merchant, and all figures to make sure that all was correct to the last peso. He looked up irritated by the interruption which Captain Blood's advent occasioned. "M. le Baron," the latter greeted him. "I must speak frankly; and you must suffer it. My men are on the point of mutiny."

The end of it all was that M. de Rivalro gave a promise at once to make the necessary preparations, and if Captain Blood and his officers would wait upon him on board the Victorieuse tomorrow morning, the presence and their fifth ship, surrendered there and then into their own keeping.

Among the buccaners that night there was hilarity over the abatement of M. de Rivalro's monstrous pride. But when the next day broke over Cartagena, they saw broken over Cartagena, they had the explanation of it. The abatement of M. de Rivalro had gone off with the treasure, taking with him his troops and mariners he had brought from France. He had left behind him at Cartagena not only the empty-handed buccaners, whom he had swindled, but also M. de Cussy.

Captain Blood alone kept his head, setting a curb upon his deep chagrin.

He had promised himself that before parting from M. de Rivalro he would present a reckoning for all the petty affronts and insults to which that unspeakable fellow—now proved a scoundrel—had subjected him.

"Follow and punish," he declared. "Setting a course for Hispaniola, since they judged that thither must Rivalro go to rest, before attempting to cross to France, the Arabella and the Elizabeth plowed briskly northward with a moderately favorable wind for two days and nights without ever catching a glimpse of their quarry. The wind, to which they were sailing very close, was westerly, and it bore to their ears a booming sound.

"Guns!" said Pitt, who stood with Blood upon the quarter-deck. Blood nodded, listening.

"Ten miles away, perhaps fifteen—somewhere off Port Royal I should judge," Pitt added. Then he looked at his captain. "Does it concern us?" he asked.

"Guns off Port Royal," that should argue Colonel Bishop at work. And against whom should he be in action but against friends of ours? I think it may concern us. Bid them put the helm over."

They held to their course, with all object on deck, anxiously scanning the sea ahead. And presently an object loomed into view, which soon defined itself for a great ship on

fire. As the Arabella with the Elizabeth following closely raced nearer on their northwesterly tack, the outlines of the blazing vessel grew clearer. Presently her masts stood out sharp and black above the smoke and flames, and through his telescope Blood made out plainly the pennon of St. George fluttering from her maintop.

"An English ship!" he cried. He scanned the sea for the counter-quever in the battle of which the grim evidence was added to that of the sounds they had heard, and when at last, as they drew closer to the doomed vessel, they made out the shadowy outlines of three tall ships, some three or four miles away, standing in toward Port Royal, the first and natural assumption was that these ships must belong to the Jamaica fleet. But Pitt, who through the telescope was examining the receding squadron, observed things apparent only to the eye of the trained mariner, and made the incredible announcement that the largest of these three vessels was Rivalro's Victorieuse.

CHAPTER XXIX.

One of the boats bumped along-side the Arabella, and up the entrance ladder came first a slight, spruce little gentleman in a coat of murrey satin laced with gold, whose wizened, yellow, rather peevish face was framed in a heavy black periwig.

(Continued Tomorrow.)

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